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Legends and Lyrics

OF THE

GULF COAST

BY LAURA F. HINSDALE

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LEGENDS AND LYRICS

OF THE

GULF COAST

novel
BY *ending* LAURA F. HINSDALE, Litt. D.

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PREFACE

The Gulf Coast, especially that portion between New Orleans and Mobile, has been commemorated in this volume. Here the student of Colonial History finds a region rich in legendary lore.

Biloxi, the old city named for an Indian tribe long vanished, greeted Iberville and his three ships, the "Badine," the "Marin" and the "Francois" in the year 1699.

Ancient publications in French and Spanish have been consulted in the history of Biloxi's romantic past. Here Fathers Davion and Montigny visited Commander Sauvolle in the first fort when Biloxi was the seat of government for the vast region named Louisiana, which since that day has been divided into many sovereign states.

Here were Iberville's inscriptions on the trees telling of his coming. The trees bore the carven figures of three ships and a pipe of peace.

Here a chapel was built and here were the first bright romances and Christian marriages when there came to these shores a ship-load of beautiful women to become the helpful companions of men in the new world of their adoption. Here the aborigines of the stone age have left traces of a life of wonderful interest. The picturesque Indian has wielded his tomahawk and sung his death song. The pirate wrecker has built his red fires to lure unsuspecting seamen to destruction. France, Spain and England have each in turn wakened the pine forest to the sound of their guns, armies have besieged these shores, but the Gulf Coast today looks smiling from her Iliad of woes.

Here the sea leads to adjacent lovely islands; conspicuous among them is Ship Island, twelve miles away, where old Fort Massachusetts enlists the interest of the historic

student. Along the shore of the Gulf Coast are fair cities whose legends and land marks are fast disappearing in the activities of a new time.

Among them is beautiful Ocean Springs, connected with Biloxi by its long bridge and its early traditions. Pass Christian, Pascagoula and Bay St. Louis are typical cities of the coast, offering sheaves from the harvest fields of the past. Gulfport has the human interest of a great ocean harbor. Beauvoir, four miles distant from Biloxi, the former home of Jefferson Davis, is now the Confederate Soldiers' Home. Charles Gayarre, the eminent historian of Louisiana and Jefferson Davis were among the number to relate to this writer some of these old legends which are herein retold in verse.

Several of the contributions of this collection first appeared in the Times-Democrat and in leading Eastern Magazines.

L. F. H.

Biloxi, 1913.

BILOXI

The blue gulf billows love thee, the blue skies bend above thee,
A hundred sails, like pinions, are winging to thy shore,
The giant live oaks over, have woven thee a cover,
And the music of thy pine woods sighs on forevermore.
In thy jasmine bordered gardens what spell of memory lies,
When the mocking birds are singing of love and Paradise!

The starry night discloses thy bowers, sweet with roses,
I hear the boatman singing a legend of the sea,
As a mirage of the highlands, I see thy distant islands,
And the white sail lingers and seems to beckon me.
In thy jasmine bordered gardens what spell of memory lies,
When the mocking birds are singing of love and Paradise!

MYSTERIOUS MUSIC OF THE GULF COAST

(The following poem which first appeared in "The American Magazine" has been widely copied. Scientific interest has for some time been awakened by those mysterious tones which may be heard in our waters on summer nights. One of the recent publications of the Bureau of Ethnology deals with our Biloxi legends, some of which are woven in the following stanzas:)

There is a time when summer stars are glowing,
And night is fair along the Southern shore,
The sailor, resting where the tide is flowing,
Hears somewhere near, below his waiting oar,
A haunting tone, now vanishing, now calling,
Now lost, now luring like some elfin air;
In murmurous music fathoms downward falling,
It seems a dream of song imprisoned there.

The legend tells, a phantom ship is beating
On yonder bar, a wanderer ever more,
Its rhythmic music, evanescent, fleeting,
Stirs the lagoon and echoes on the shore.
O phantom ship, dost near that port Elysian
Where radiant rainbow colors ever play?
Shall hope's mirage return a blessed vision;
And can'st thou find a joy of yesterday?

The legend tells of a pale horseman fleeing,
Whose steed the gnomes with metals strange have shod,
Who, on and on, a distant summit seeing,
His way pursues, in ocean paths untrod.
His spectral hoofs by the Evangel bidden
In far carillons beat in measures low,
Elusive tone! dost near where that is hidden
Which made the music of the long ago?

The legend tells of sirens of the ocean
That wander singing, where the sea palms rise,
And through the song's intense and measured motion
I seem to hear their soft imprisoned sighs.
They lure me, like the spell of a magician,
Once more I see the palaces of Spain,
I feel the kindling thrill of young ambition,
The tide sweeps on—the song is lost again.

The legend tells of vocal sea-sands sifting,
With vibrant forces, resonant and strong,
And on the surging sand-dunes fretting, drifting
Like broken hearts that hide their griefs in song.
Tell me, white atoms, in your sad oblation
Of drift that lies so deep that none may scan,
Is it forgotten in God's great creation,
Who formed the fleeting, hour-glass life of man?

The legend tells of those who long have slumbered,
A forest race too valorous to flee,
Who when in battle by their foes outnumbered
With clasping hands came singing to the sea.
The ocean drew them to her hidden keeping,
The stars watched over them in the deeps above,
Their death-song lingers, but the tones of weeping
Tell the eternity of human love.

THOU AND I

I dwell on the sorrowful star,
And thou in the Eden of light,
Yet sometimes thy voice from afar
Calls in the dreams of the night;
In the silence I know thou art near,
Compassionate, tender, divine,
Like psalmody clear, soft voices I hear,
And know the dear voice that is thine.

I dwell on the sorrowful star,
And thou in the City of God,
And those mystical gates to unbar,
There waits the long pathway untrod;
But to win thee away from the ecstasies there
Where the glories of Paradise beam,
Forgive me—self spoke, if I called thee in prayer,
And won thee to Earth in a dream.

I dwell on the sorrowful star,
And thou with the souls of the blest,
And not by a sigh would I mar
The peace of that Heavenly rest.
Be glad in the sunlight of Heaven,
Where spirits celestial may roam!
Sing on!—in the dusk of the even,
I may hear thee and follow thee Home.

THE "LIVE OAK RING"

A live oak on Biloxi's shore,
 'Mid mighty oaks a giant tree,
A score of centuries or more
 Has grown in beauty by the sea.
Deep bedded in the wave-washed sands,
 Its wondrous roots their life have won,
And crowned with verdure there it stands
 With all its branches to the sun.

How many an unrecorded day
 Along its history enweaves!
What fancies in its shadows play
 Like rainfall in its summer leaves!
Sweet birds, whose songs no more are ours,
 Within its boughs have built and sung,
And at its roots forgotten flowers,
 Their odorous blossom bells have swung.

'Twas here she grew, flower of the wild,
 A maiden of Biloxi's race,
A chieftain's fair and only child,
 A blithesome maid of winsome grace.
The bravest warriors of the chase,
 To her their trophies brought,
And for a glimpse of her sweet face
 The proudest warrior sought.
 But one there came with plumed crest,
 A Natchez warrior from the west,
His feet the fleetest brave outvied,
 Swift as the mountain roe,
But when he reached the maiden's side,
 His footsteps loitered slow.

His rallying cry rang loud and clear,
To meet the coming foe,
But when he won the maiden's ear,
His voice was soft and low.
And so he told her o'er and o'er
He would have sunshine at his door,
He asked a blossom for his breast,
A star to light his crest.

'The warrior sought the chieftain's side,
A Natchez ring he bore.
He asked the maiden for his bride
To leave his side no more,
The chieftain answered as in glee,
"When a ring grows on yonder tree,
And circles yonder bough,
Then you may bear my child from me,
And wed with ring and vow."
The bright waves laughed and through the tree
There sounded in an undertone
Voices of tender witchery,
"She loves, she loves but thee alone,
Love can not lose its own."

A storm swept o'er the Southern coast,
The grandest of the long ago,
And more than one brave ship was lost
In the wide gulf of Mexico.
But still the tree uprose in power,
And on its bough, O wondrous thing!
The transmutation of an hour,
Two branches twined into a ring.

A ring so wide that one may see
Within its circle Heaven's own blue,
The live oak held the lover's key
To life's old story, always new.

'Tis many a year since they were wed,
And o'er their graves what fancies spring,
For still the pilgrim hither led
May find the oak tree and ring.
Above the rectory door it stands,
Its branches by the seabreath blown,
And upward seems to reach its hands,
Where Love may ever find its own.

THE WOOD THRUSH

'Twas May, the early morning, when first I heard him calling
In the moss-embowered thicket where dusky shadows fall,
And still I hear the echo of all the tones entralling,
The passion, the abandon, the music of his call.

Like fragrance, violet-laden, the tangled tones translated,
The spell of the blue Heavens, the sunlight and the sea;
It told the witching secret that all the night had waited,
How Earth may be an Eden, when the heart may dream
of thee.

On the fair face of the morning there was no look of
scorning,
There were no tones discordant in the wide world,—
ah me!—
The morning star shone over, while the thrush in his green
cover
Confessed himself a lover, and sang of love and thee.

A GULF COAST LEGEND OF THE CHEROKEE ROSE

The old trees know the legends if we listen when they speak
Of war, of love, of romance, to kindle eye and cheek,
Here where the blue gulf widens and breaks along the shore,
The forest echoes whisper of the days that are no more,
And moving on the long white strand I see a shadowy host,
And the soldiers of Fort Louis are the guardians of the coast.

Here in the old traditions came the maidens of the Loire,
The warriors of the Grand Monarque to seek the lonely
shore,

And one there came whose life is told in love from sire to
son,

He was a servant of the cross, good Father Davion,
With the crucifix upon his breast one night he wandered far,
He found his way but dimly by the shining of a star.

At last a welcome in a tent among the Cherokees,
He slept to the wind sighing among the forest trees,
And in a dream once more he saw his mother's tender eyes
Bending above him in the light that fell from Paradise.
She pointed to a snow white flower "Twill lead thee home,"
she said,

He gazed in joy and wonderment until the dream was fled.
The petals were like snow flakes, the heart a golden light,
The tiny tendrils reached to Heaven as though it longed for
flight,

And on its boughs, as if to speak with love that cheers and
warms,

He saw amid a thousand stars the Master's crown of thorns.

Among the wandering Cherokees he knelt in silent prayer,
While the roses swayed their chalices like incense on the air,
And the morning birds above him in the magnolia tree,
Sang on of love and Heaven, a *Benedicite*.

Away! away he hastened, the cross upon his breast,
Far lies the good Fort Louis, and peril marks the quest.

The gray moss curtains darken the depths of shade
unknown,
And in the West the storm clouds threaten in undertone,
The wild beasts of the forest lurk on the lonely path,
And nearer came the tempest, with tropic gloom and wrath.
A thousand boding voices called Father Davion,
But he thought him of the Master in the wilderness alone,
And all along his pathway the snow white blossoms grew,
And smiled upon the Father as upon a face they knew,
"Follow," they seemed to whisper, "For we are leading thee."
"Onward and ever onward to the old Fort by the sea."

They tangled o'er the bayous and made a bridge across,
Through jungles of palmettoes and clouds of Spanish moss,
Where the Yuccas spread their lances in battle league
arrayed,
Where the dark streams were the deepest, they wandered
unafraid.
And o'er the shifting sand dunes, where doubt and danger
bars,
The white rose of the Cherokees builded a path of stars.
'Till after many a sorrow, leaning on Sauvolle's breast,
The good Priest told the vision that all his journey blest,
And heard the brave Commander, pledge on his bended
knee,
To build there the first chapel in Biloxi by the sea.

The guns of old Fort Louis have crumbled many a spring,
But Sauvolle's dirge still lingers where the winds and
waters sing.
The true knights of the *Fleur de Lis* no longer guard the
keep,
The lovely dames and 'demoiselles are many a year asleep.
The sails that bore their barges no longer proudly float,
Their armor and their swords are rust, the reeds sigh in
the moat,
The chapel walls have fallen and faded into dust,
But the old trees keep the legends as in a sacred trust.
And still with every summer the forest ways disclose
The flower of Father Davion, the Cherokee white rose.

TERIAS LISA

(At Ship Island, Gulf of Mexico.)

Frail habitant of yonder shore,
From off the leaf that sheltered thee
What wondrous craft thy being bore
Safe through the cyclone of the sea!
Thy citron-yellow wings are bright,
And soft the rosy fringe they wear,
And rays of bloom and silver light
Adorn thee, blossom of the air

The Cassia, on whose silken flower
Thy fragile life its being fills,
What has thou garnered of its dower
To waft thee where thy spirit wills?
What dream of flowers of fairer hues,
Of lights more beautiful than dawn,
Of winds of balm and honey-dews
Allured thee ever on and on?

Thou didst but ask, O fairy spirit,
A blossom cup, the morning beam,
Companions for thy circling flight,
And love to share thy rainbow dream!
Here on the white, sea-drifted shore
Thy feeble, fluttering life I scan;
Thou tellest the lesson o'er and o'er,—
Thou art the history of man.

THE DAUPHINE ISLES

When twilight shadows darken down,
And vesper hour is o'er,
A little maid with eyes of brown
Seeks the Biloxi shore,
Where gulls are skimming o'er the sands,
And night birds inland flee,
With eager eyes and clasped hands
She looks toward the sea.
And as she scans the waters o'er
A song her watch beguiles,
A boat is coming to the shore
From off the Dauphine Isles.

She waited when the morn afar
Hid all her rainbow light,
She lingered when the evening star
Was shining through the night.
The King might lose his royal crown,
And dynasties might fall,
Republics rise and thrones go down—
The maid cares not at all.
She sees the coming of a sail,
With happy tears and smiles,
The boat that weathered out the gale
From off the Dauphine Isles.

Fast, fast, the sail comes into sight,
The tide comes o'er the bar,
And yonder the Biloxi light
Shines like a golden star.
Above the dip of eager oars
The sailor's greetings ring,

And deft and fast the sail he lowers,
Ah, who would be a king
If such a maid would win him home
With kisses and with smiles?
Or choose on wider seas to roam
From off the Dauphine Isles?

NIGHT ON THE GULF COAST

My boat is drifting to the shore,
A track of silver in its wake,
Around the prow the ripples break,
And diamonds flash from off the oar.
A crescent moon is in the blue,
And to the West the evening star,
Shines brightly o'er the harbor bar,
And where the white beach comes to view:

Like some mysterious snowy scroll
A line of sea gulls far away
Fades where the shadows bridge the bay
Where sounds a sailor's *barcarole*,
A la Creole, the soft refrain
To words of witcherie are set
Soft as the fall of the summer rain
And tender as a heart's regret.

Along the shore the myrtle bends
To scatter clouds of roseate bloom
And the pale jasmine's night perfume,
Like incense at an altar blends.
Balsamic odors fill the breeze
The fragrance of the dark pine woods
The breath of yonder solitudes
Of orange and magnolia trees.

Leagues outward burns the island light
A planet fire untremulous,
While soft and clear the angelus
Rings out the message of the night.
Lo, now a rippling voice is heard,
The ears are stilled to catch the note,
All June's rare transport fills his throat,
He sings of love—the mocking bird!

THE NIGHT JASMINE

Thou vesper blossom, on thy petals white
A tear has fallen from the summer night;
O'er thee the night-wind blows;
Thy sweetest fragrance, hidden from the light,
The darkness doth disclose.

Ah! dost thou know that thou an alien art,
That from thy home thou bloomest far apart
Thou dainty pearl of flowers,
Giving unseen the treasures of thy heart,
Through all the darksome hours!—

Hast thou a sigh for thy companions flown,
And dost thou waft a message to thine own
Where such as thou may'st come?
In darkness art thou dreaming there alone
Of Paradise and Home?

A CLUSTER OF LICHEN

A fragment torn from yon gray stone
The wind has blown to me;
Bit of Creation's livery known
To mount, and rock, and tree.
Long aeons ere the flowers smiled
Its lowly type had birth;
Bloom of the youth-world, first beguiled
To grace fair Mother Earth.
A hundred year perchance and more
It clung to yon gray stone,
Ere it had curved a tiny spore
From granite atoms grown.

Pray tell me, and thy worth enhance,
Fair prophet of the flower,
How, from the clogs of circumstance,
Thou grewest from hour to hour?
Whence came thy patient strength to wait,
Thy long unyielding strife,
Who taught thee to assimilate
Thy elemental life?

Then tell me of a soul long gone
That strove in doubt and fear,
Nor felt the glory of the dawn,
Nor saw the morn appear,
Yet patient wrought, in pain and tears,
With courage strong, divine,
Back in the far primeval years,
Say, was it kin of thine?

THE MUSIC OF THE PINES

The Dryad knows the minstrel who taught the pines to sing
'Till every green leaf needle wakes as a harper's string.
The sweet Aeolian voices across the forest call
In fairy tones and Elfin that hold the heart in thrall.
Mysterious magician whate'er the secret be
The pine woods of the Gulf Coast tell the music of the sea.

The song of merry barges with silver sails abreast
Re-echoes when the cloud drift is blowing from the West,
The rush of the tide water along the sandy bar,
Sweeps through the forest unison like melody afar
Like spirit answering spirit, exultant, glad and free,
The pine woods of the Gulf Coast sing the music of the sea.

And when the pines are dreaming deep dreams of days long
gone
You may hear in their complaining the sea's requiem tone.
For argosies full freighted that vanished long ago
To ports in some far distance whose names we may not
know.
And halycon tones seem calling where troubled hearts may
flee;—
The pine woods of the Gulf Coast sigh the music of the sea.

A COAST LIGHT

When twilight darkens into night
The pendule tells the hour
When Myra makes the signal light
In yonder lighthouse tower.
Bright as the evening star it glows
The wide, dark waters o'er;
The home-returning sailor knows
His own Biloxi shore.

When tempest-driven the vessel rocks,
And lurid lightnings flame,
When storms beat down and thunder shocks,
The signal burns the same.
Brave as a bird, poised in its flight
Above the tempest's roar,
Beams out the guardian of the night
Along Biloxi's shore.

It tells of waiting household mirth
Where laughing children play,
Where wives and mothers light the hearth,
The while they watch and pray.
It tells of heroes of the seas,
Of ships that come no more;
While buoyant sails float with the breeze
Toward Biloxi's shore.

May He who lights the evening star
His watch above her keep,
Whose hands, with faithful care, unbar
The shadows of the deep,
And One, who walked on Galilee
And stilled the waves of yore,
Bring home the sailor on the sea
Safe to Biloxi's shore.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

O dost thou know a vesper bloom
Whose fragrance fills the evening gloom
With soft, bewitching power,
Unfolding when the stars of night
Make all the dark-blue heavens bright?
It is the jasmine flower.

“King Louis’ ship has come to shore,
It was his hand that sent us bread!”
But as they gave where famine plead,
With bended knee, the soldier said:
“’Twas not the King who lit the way—
It was the prayer of Eona.”

The forts they builded long ago
Along the Gulf of Mexico
Are buried in the drifting sand;
Their very graves we may not know,
Those brave defenders of our land.
But here, where memory traces still
Names of *LaSalle*, and *Iberville*,
Sauvolle, *DeSoto*, *Perrier*
St. Denis, *Crozat*, *Livaudais*
Tradition dreams of Eona.

For still, when summer nights are dark,
With not a star to light or save,
The watchful sailor oft will mark
That wondrous light upon the wave.
It glitters ’neath his bending oar,
It flashes in his vessel’s wake,
It dashes shining on the shore,
As summer lightnings flash and break.
If there be wreckers any more,
The boldest seaman can not say
But somewhere on a distant shore
He hears the prayer of Eona.

THE TRUE SONG OF THE MOCKING BIRD

The true song of the mocking bird
Far in the woodland lone is heard
No mimic strain therein has part
The tones come singing from his heart,
Another note he brings each day,
Where roses o'er the lattice stray,
The song in which the world has part
Is not the true song of his heart.

In dulcet palpitating tone
He sings and dreams himself alone,
Such music in the measure lies
'Tis like a voice from Paradise.
I, softly stealing through the wood,
Capture the song, a sweet prelude,
It thrills the dusky solitude,
Dream of a nest and downy brood.

Through all the song's bewitching power,
There floats as fragrance from a flower
A spell as though a haunting tone
Had drifted from a joy long flown.
Dear bird, your secret who would tell,
One hint of your sweet madrigal,
Enough one listening ear had part
And heard the singing of a heart.

SHIP ISLAND LIGHT

Ship Island seems a drift of snow,
Fort Massachusetts guards her glory,
With legends of the long ago
Each cannon, a *memento mori*
On pyramidal tower of white
Here burns the red fixed island light.

Isles of the Gulf of Mexico
Rise white and fair by Heaven planted,
And there the birds rock to and fro
And sing old songs of ports enchanted.
The siren songs that fill the night
Around the fair Ship Island light.

When midnight darkens o'er the sea
And through the gloom the storm clouds mutter.
When hidden shoals are to the lee
The main mast bends, the top sails flutter.
The sailor knows no gladder sight
Than glows in the Ship Island light.

For twenty years through storm and shine
As mariners may well remember,
The clear, true light, like Love Divine,
shown Has shown on high a glowing ember
The seaman's star to guide his flight
Through the wild passes of the night.

Brave Dan McCall, no hurricane
With breaking waves of crested splendor,
Like mighty armies of the main
Has ever dared thee to surrender.
Firm at thy post, in Duty's might
Guard thou the old Ship Island light.

A SPANISH GULF SONG

The far gulf mists are rising
The white caps fleck the sea,
But to the fishermen's cottage
Asong floats merrily.
The Spanish sailor dreaming
Flies with his gallant sail,
I hear the echoes calling,
In music on the gale
Voy a casa! Voy a casa
I'm going home!

A flower from the sea marshes,
Shells from the Chandeleur,
A sea bird from the storm-wreck
They all are garnered here.
Drift from old ocean's treasure
To deck the household shrine,
A wealth that knows no measure
And bears Love's countersign.
Voy a casa! Voy a casa.
I'm going home!

"El tiempo se compone!"
He ties the anchor chain;
I think of Salamanca
And many a port in Spain
The citadel of Malaga
The stronghold of the Moor
But the sailor only dreamed of her
Who waited at his door.
Voy a casa! Voy a casa,
I'm going home!

SAILING ON THE GULF

Upon the Gulf of Mexico
The sails are flying free,
The stormy winds of winter blow
Boreas rules the sea.
The sailors of the Southern coast,
Are brave as any sea may boast.

Upon the Gulf of Mexico
Afar in other years,
Came motley crews, a *rendezvous*,
The master buccaneers.
Homeric chapters might be told
Of heavy guns and pirates bold,
Of men who prowled the sea for gold.

Around the islands far away
Whose lights to-night we greet,
Along the *Barrataria* Bay
Sailed Jean and Pierre Lafitte.
When midnight's mystic powers prevail,
'Tis said, dark hull and phantom sail
And boom of guns, repeat the tale.

Upon the Gulf of Mexico
Brave heroes proved their zeal,
Here came *LaSalle* long time ago
And gallant *Iberville*,
And they who bore the pain and loss,
On holy eves their banners toss
For here they raised our Saviour's cross.

Upon the Gulf of Mexico
A sea bird since that time
Whose dwelling place we may not know
Sings like a matin chime.
"Prie-Dieu" sounds near and far,
In dulcet tones no storm may mar,
As though it floated from a star.

FILLES A LA CASSETTE

Of all the bright romances
The Southern land may boast,
A glamour of sweet fancies,
Historic page enhances
A vista of the coast.

His majesty's fair cargo,
Maids of the *Fleur de Lis*,
They came the dear embargo,
As in another Argo,
To seek the Mexic seas.

The very waves were singing
In dancing spray and foam,
When o'er the waters winging
The welcome ship came bringing
The maidens to their home.

The ocean fires were lighted
With all their phosphor glow,
And the crescent moon invited
Where knight and maid were plighted
On the Gulf of Mexico.

"Neath jasmine and pomegranate,
The live oak, bay and pine,
Their love hymn, Heaven begun it,
And smiling star and planet
Beheld their altar shrine.

And so the old songs glowing,
Drift from the Troubadours,
Romana's speech bestowing,
In dulcet tones and flowing
Came to the Southern shores.

In woodland's dim seclusion
Woke *chansons* of romance,
And in a witching fusion
Song voices Andalusion
Spoke in the tones of France.

ASTRAND

Yon little boat is moored so low
That only one who mindful heeds
Would ever grant its power to go
Beyond the sands, beyond the reeds,
Where ocean billows ebb and flow.

And yet this boat its builder wrought
Year after year in toilsome mood,
Its gyres and timbers patient sought
Through heavy hours of solitude,
And dreamed himself an argonaut.

No passing eyes to-day divine
The tale of all his long desire,
Although he builded strong and fine
He wrought its bolts in furnace fire,
Its anchors forged in storm and shine.

What fabrics of his treasure strove
What hues of gold, and tints of rose,
In yonder drooping sails he wove
The wide, wide world nor cares nor knows
He bade it speed—his work of love.

But never came the lagging tide
To lift the boat upon its breast
And all the crew forsook his side
And wandered East and wandered West,
In vain to launch his boat he tried.

There comes no passing boat in hail
No signal through the distance gleams,
Dark mists the seaward vistas veil;
To realize the builder's dreams
No breeze unfurls the silent sail.

Round prow and keel slow drifts the sand,
And they who pass nor heed, nor see
One pull to aid the builder's hand
Had launched this little boat. Ah me
This waiting boat so long astrand.

But may be in some future hour
Some delver in the sands shall tell,
A builder built by right or dower,
This builder builded staunch and well,
And then the world shall own his power.

MEMORIAL CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER.—BILOXI ON THE GULF COAST

Built in Memory of Rev. Robert G. Hinsdale, S. T. D., by
Mr. H. T. Howard.

O Love of Heaven, the lifting of the heart
From this poor dust unto our God on High,
In this fair fane in which to-day Thou art
Man's aspiration reaches to the sky.
Cross to the Heavens, and portals to the sea,
Wide as the Earth thy influence may flow;
And as a storm-tossed bird may homeward flee
Thy brooding peace the troubled heart may know.
Forever green thy sheltering live oaks stand,
As the dear memories thy shrines enfold,
A beacon light upon the sea and land
Thy Liturgy shall call through years untold,
Type of high Faith, the purest and the best,
Of love to man, God's blessing on thee rest.

A LEGEND OF THE GULF FORTS

'Twas midnight hour, and in the years long flown
The Holy Father at the altar shrine
Knelt, where a breviary illuminated shone
With Raffaele's dreams of glowing forms divine.

From ether depths they slowly seemed to glide,
Poised toward Heaven, along a mystic bar,
Till as he gazed, a star he dreamed outvied
The shining page, and beckoned him afar.

Then in a vision on a wandering way
Where Fort Barrancas looks upon the bay,
Above the bluff, he saw the red star shine,
As some strange portent and a warning sign.

On Santa Rosa's Isle high over all,
He saw in wonderment red halos play,
On old Fort Pickens closed and bastioned wall
And on the navy yard of Fort McRee,
At the sea entrance on the Dauphine Isle
Where Fort Gaines stands, a guardian pentagon,
At old Fort Bowyer it lingered for a while,
And redly glowed above Fort Marion.
And where Fort Jackson and Port Philip stand,
A maritime defense from Southern seas,
The red star halted, as by slow command
At *Chef Menteur* and the *Rigolets*.
Above Fort Pike and over Fort Macomb,
Fort Livingston and Barrataria Bay,
And where Ship Island lights the seaman home
Over Fort Davis faded slow away.
Startled the Father wakened, from afar
There came strange voices and hurrying feet,
"Tis at our ports," they cried, "the war! the war!"
And all our forts make ready for the fleet,
The darkness o'er our land is sweeping low
The war cloud fills the Gulf of Mexico.
Our bravest heroes may return no more
And war's red star is risen on our shore!"

The Father answered with a saintly grace,
A wondrous light shone on his pallid face,
He spoke as one who clearly knew and saw
With second sight surpassing nature's law.
In some rapt vision the freed soul had been
Upon the border worlds of life unseen,
And in that moment of supreme release
Had heard the prophecy of coming peace.

MARJORIE AND JOE

White sand is drifted o'er the floor,
White as the cotton bloom,
Like mist the walls are shrouded o'er
And silence fills the room.
Here where she sleeps her narrow bed
With immortelles is white,
Pale burn the tapers at her head
The long October night.

An humble fisher's cottage there
But ye who come should bring,
Such reverence as ye would bear
The palace of a King.
When yester night her brother's boat
Was wrecked on yonder sea
For a brave hour they kept afloat
Joe and Sweet Marjorie.

"If I still cling to you I know
You'll never reach the land"
She softly kissed her brother Joe
While she unclasped her hand.
A moment and the mad waves toss
Above her golden head;
Joe sees it holding to the cross
Joe weeping by the bed.

He sees the tide come bringing home
The sea drift to the strand,
Her lovely shadow in the foam,
Her face upon the sand.
The Gulf hath treasures fair to see
But none more rare I know,
Than the last kiss of Marjorie
For her poor brother Joe.

THE OLD INDIAN TRAIL

Here Pascagoula, Chickasaw,
Here Pensacola and Choctaw
Have wandered face to face,
And here they came the Muscogees,
The old chiefs of the Cherokees,
And the Biloxi race.

With gourds and shells their music rude
Filled all this Gulf Coast solitude,
And yonder falling mound,
Holds battle signs of long ago,
Tells where their torch fires used to glow
Who sleeps there, under ground.

Across their long trail you may pass
'Neath cypress trees and sassafras
Where the palmetto grows.
The live oak, like them, stoic-born,
Untouched by flattery or scorn
Only their history knows.

Here by the cool spring is the sign
Where they encamped; the muscadine
Half hides it from the sight,
Over the *bayous* fringed with moss
Their winged arrows sped cross
With swift and steady flight.

The reeds still sing their lullabies
And still their mystic watch fires rise,
And many a secret tale,
Is told to him in solitude
Who walks the long path through the wood
Along the Indian trail.

A MIRAGE OF THE GULF

It shines with spires and temples golden
I see afar its curtains rise,
By sapphire seas it is enfolden
This city of the azure skies.

Its banners float triumphal over
With diamond lights above the dome,
The islands in the distance hover
And rainbow bridges span the foam.
Aerial lights like gems are glowing
In splendor o'er the misty sea,
And sails across the distance blowing
Seem bringing home the loved to me.
And where the ramparts shine and glisten
Celestial choirs, O lovely band!
Make mystic music, we may listen
To voices of the Better Land.
O paths of light to fields Elysian
Between us trackless waters rise,
A veil of shadow o'er the vision
The mirage fades, the daylight dies.

A CHARM OF ST. JOHN'S EVE

A lily in her girdle and in her hand a rune,
The fairest Creole maiden of all the flowers in June,
She wears a fragrant garland most fair to look upon;
'Tis the eve of the midsummer, the vigil of Saint John.

Mysterious golden tendrils, and wands from herbs unknown,
In depths of sombre forests she gathered there alone.
And all the silence whispered a word she could not name,
For light that came upon her face in sudden tints of flame.

The mocking birds above her the sweet confession heard,
The bells of the night jasmine at her passing footfall stirred,
The dryad of the forest, the spirit of the pines,
Enshrouded her with twilight and shadows of the vines.

She gathered the Saint Johns'swort to find an answer true,
And tried the spell prophetic the Voodoo Princess knew;
Then when the stars above her gave forth their golden sign,
She breathed upon the garland, and placed it on the shrine.

This dainty, fragrant garland, twined with an antique rune,
With subtle charm and fragrance won from the heart of
June;

When midnight bells are tolling, its magic power shall wait,
Where lovers' vows assemble around the dreamland gate.

Grant ere the morning wakens before the maiden's eyes,
A fairy dream prophetic in beauty to arise—
To wear the sweet enchantment of life's unclouded dawn,
The gift of the midsummer and the Festa of Saint John.

THE COMING OF THE DRYAD

The sails are set to the fishing boats,
The mists of the morn are clearing,
The tarpon's silvery shadow floats
And flashes, disappearing.
Sea birds call from the white sand dune,
Sea waves whisper a mystic rune,
And not a tone from her cadence lost
The Dryad is coming along the coast.

The live oak shadows above her sway
And the mistletoe, low bending,
Laurel, magnolia, cedar and bay,
Their symphonies are blending.
Listen! the pines the prelude know
Flute-like tones from the cane brake below,
Here in the green palmetto dells
Witcherie waits of a hundred spells,
Aeolus wakens the wild wood rose
And the moquier's song together,
The red pomegranate buds uncloset
As largess to the weather,
The Nerides with the lilies float
The marsh reeds answer Syrinx's note;
The sphinx on his own cape jasmine swings,
The bee is down in the clover,
And the butterflies have found their wings
From the rainbow sky hung over,
Nymphs of the woods and hills are glad
Naid, Echo and Oread,
Pan is here with his singing host,
The Dryad is coming along the coast!

THE SIEUR ALEXANDRE'S TAPERS

In Chalevoix's old journal find the name
Of *Sieur Alexandre** surgeon of the coast,
He came in time of her colonial fame
A meagre record his, the uttermost,
That from the coast wax myrtle a pure flame
Grew at his bidding and the records boast
The tapers that he made were pure and bright
And seemed the very witcherie of light.

Ethereal, like some mystic power, 'tis said
Beneath his touch the waxen flame burned clear,
And even in the smoke sweet perfume shed,
Like the young leaves new gathered with the year.
In old Fort Louis, in those times long fled
'Round dying beds, when nights were dark and lone
Through weary vigils, oft the tapers shone.
The secret haunt of many a flower and tree
The *Sieur Alexandre* come to know,
He hoped to send each year across the sea
Wax myrtle tapers, blanced as driven snow,
Marked with the insignia of the *fleur-de-lis*
From the new world to come, a blessed sign,
A fitting light for consecrated shrine.

Beneath the flag of lilies he would make,
By searchings oft and labor's patient art
A flame, like incense for His blessed sake
Who knows the secret places of the heart
And through the midnight forest light should break,
And songs of joy the Red Man's litany,
Sweet as the fragrance of the myrtle tree.

Across the years tradition pictures him

Bringing his gifts to light the altars there,
The silent nights were mist obscured and dim,

And with the incense rose the breath of prayer.
The coming ship beyond the horizon's rim!—
The live oaks spread their cover,—the gray moss,—
While the fair tapers lit the altar cross.

The *Sieur Alexandre* is long forgot

In the new lights of swiftly flitting years,
Yet when to-day in yonder myrtle grot
I read the story of his hopes and fears
The myrtle shadow was a sacred spot,
His name, the soft leaf music murmured low
And as a star his memory seemed to glow.
Lord, grant our lives when day is done may be

As fair as this, a poor man's humble mark,
A hope to make a light so fair, so free,

That it may shine out clearly in the dark;
That on our path Heaven's radiance we may see
And to the cross may bring life's fairest bloom,
And make a white light in a world of gloom.

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